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Mr. Gladstone and Midlothian

Edinburgh

1880

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MR GLADSTONE AND MIDLOTHIAN

A LETTER

TO

THE EARL OF ROSEBERY

BY

LORD STRATHEDEN AND CAMPBELL

SECOND EDITION

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
1880

Price One Shilling

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AMONG men of sense there is a general impression, that the pamphlet is an obsolete contrivance, in an age of magazines and leading articles, in which political discussion of the highest form, apparently exhausts itself. It should therefore be remembered that the object of the present writer is to reach the home of every elector in Midlothian, which could not well be done—except from a reprint—in any other manner. He could not either, without surrendering his argument, claim admission to any Tory periodicals. On the other hand, as a contributor to all of them, the late Prime Minister must exercise a sway over those which aim at any Liberal connexion. If, indeed, the successors of Lord Jeffrey, aspired to his function of directing the Whig party, without any fear of persons, the task might have been wholly superseded. But it is much to be feared that when they quitted his Northern throne, they renounced at least a portion of their independence, and their nationality together. No one knows better than the writer, that a pamphlet to be supportable in our day, must be essential, and that at the best it wears the aspect of a skiff encompassed by Great Easterns. It ought to be remarked further, that the form of a letter to the Earl of Rosebery, is not adopted for convenience, in the mode well known to the last century, but involves a genuine appeal to one so placed by complex facts, as to have the power of deciding, to a great extent, the result of an election nationally critical.

To avoid the chance of private correspondence which he has little time or turn for, the writer did not put his name at first upon the title-page; but there is no responsibility which he desires to escape. So small and fugitive a piece must be wholly useless, unless those immediately concerned, diffuse in other shapes the matter it presents to them. The maxim of Lord Bacon, sound in many fields, is sounder in none than an electioneering contest: 'Nec nuda manus, nec intellectus sibi permissus, multum valet. Instrumentis et auxiliis res perficitur.'

My Lord,—A critic of the novel part, you have just adopted in Midlothian may still regard with more than cordiality, the end to which you are apparently devoted. Whoever labours to effect a change of Government at the approaching General Election, is, *primâ facie*, entitled to the thanks of the community. To act thus, without regard to prejudice, or fashion, or antiquated standing orders of the House of Commons, which cannot really bind the House of Lords, enhances instead of lowering his merit, and renders it a proof of courage, enterprise, originality, as well as solid judgment, in the business of the Empire. The grounds on which a change of Government is necessary may be brought into a narrow space, however various and endless the transactions which give rise to them. With the bright exception of Lord Beaconsfield, and in defiance of his prominent example, the actual Cabinet have sacrificed the toil of Downing Street to the excitement of the platform, in a manner unparalleled since the Revolution of 1688, and wholly incompatible with the due administration of their offices. Their conduct on the Irish University Bill, was an abuse of Parliamentary majorities, and leads to the conclusion that there is no scheme, however crude, they may not prudentially withhold at the beginning of the Session, to be unscrupulously flung before the Legislature in the last month, when all its members know that it is quite disabled for resisting or examining. As to their foreign policy, against remonstrances in Parliament and against commotion in the masses, they were unfaithful to the treaties left by the Crimean War, during the whole of 1877, at the dictation of a pro-Russian group they now contemn as insignificant. Last of all, after a General Election in the ordinary course of things, they cannot be under the shelter, of what many still accept as the redeeming name and compensating talent of the Premier. So much to convince you that it is not as a partisan

of the Government I take upon me to address your lordship in what may seem to be the language of remonstrance.

So again I am no partisan of Lord Dalkeith, whom I have never seen, whose career is little known to me, whose success or failure, as it regards himself, would be to me a point of absolute indifference. The Duke of Buccleuch, indeed, may be the object of a different sentiment to all of us. His Grace is universally esteemed where he is known as a proprietor. He was a member of the Cabinet which introduced Free Trade in corn, and since has never violently thwarted any measure which the friends of civil and religious liberty demanded. He was an ornament, he is a patron, of the hunting-field. His zeal for the militia, never fails on proper opportunities to show itself in Parliament. But although Midlothian—in common with the rest of Scotland—may be grateful to him, from many points of view, we are not to forget what the great orator of Ireland Mr. Grattan, long ago remarked, that 'gratitude has limits.' A woman—as he reasoned—ought not to be grateful by the sacrifice of virtue, a man by that of honour, a nation by that of freedom, and so, he might have added, a leading body of electors, by that of duty to the world at large, in choosing representatives. Although Whig and Tory feel alike his salutary influence, although, within certain bounds, the first man in Scotland may engage their deference and sympathy, the Duke of Buccleuch is not entitled to demand a contribution to a new majority for propping up the Government —without Lord Beaconsfield to guide it—unless the alternative is one which the county finds itself obliged at every hazard to repel and to defeat, on grounds of stringent and of paramount necessity.

You cannot, therefore, see in me either a friend of the Conservatives, an organ of Lord Dalkeith, or blind supporter of his Grace, when I advance another step in the path which is traced out for me. It ought not to escape the lowest order of political sagacity, that the ovations Mr. Gladstone has enjoyed, under your auspices, tend immediately to bring him back to the power from which he fell in 1874. It matters little—I must dare to say—whether you view the subject in this light, or wish to be a party to the end referred to. Mr. Gladstone has proclaimed to Europe through the 'Gaulois' his willingness to revert to his former post, should popular enthusiasm be strong enough to urge him to the venture. His London organs have again betrayed their nearly amorous propensity to re-endow and re-establish the Gamaliel they had mourned over. But you are quite at liberty to seek a stronger indication, not traced from others, but himself, not founded upon language, but on conduct. The series of exertions in Midlothian may fairly be attributed to the legitimate desire of a candidate to exhaust the best securities, for winning an election which he may feel within, he never ought to have attempted. But the harangues at nearly every station, in going and returning, as well as those in other parts of Scotland, require a different explanation. So far from adding to his prospect in Midlothian, they were calculated to impede it. The first set were a distinct avowal that it was not worth while to reserve his thoughts, his energy, his spirit, for the voters he was rapidly approaching. The second set no less unguardedly declared that in Midlothian his opinions had neither been effectually nor finally promulgated. Both tended to deprive the county of any special honour he had paid to it. In relation, therefore, to his function as a candidate, one set was an insulting prelude, the other a disparaging, and some might think indeed derogatory, epilogue. We must acquit the late Prime Minister —at so mature an age—of a puerile and morbid wish to be incessantly applauded. The object of these untoward utterances —untoward at least in every other sense—could only be, to kindle in his favour, every part of the United Kingdom he was traversing, even at the risk of alienating those it was an immediate object to propitiate. To make it clearer that the effort is an effort for re-establishing the system which the General Election of 1874 had put an end to, let me remind you that to oppose Lord Dalkeith with every advantage it was not requisite to go beyond the border for a candidate. But if distinguished strangers, known for long connection with the party, were essential to Midlothian, such persons as Sir William Gregory, Sir Frederic Peel, and Mr. Milner Gibson might have been easily available. Not one of them is responsible for any of the errors usually ascribed to the late Government, while Mr. Gladstone, from the office which he held, is unfortunately loaded with responsibility for all of them. It is, therefore, incontestable that sound electioneering tactics have been given up, that the hazard of defeat has been enhanced, and a vantage ground extended to Conservatives; but not, of course, without an object. The object can only be to restore the late Prime Minister to the supremacy he forfeited. Nor is the calculation an absurd one, which assumes that his return to Westminster, in the midst of a vague idea that Scotland was behind him, would make it hard for those, whom you would readily acknowledge as technically leaders of the party, to supersede or to absorb a representative so powerful.

The restoration you are thus—perhaps unconsciously—promoting is open to remarks of varying importance, and I begin with the most trifling. It is not easily combined with justice to Lord Granville and Lord Hartington. Some, no doubt, would urge that they have both been led either into ambiguity or error upon foreign policy since 1874; and that they have shown little resolution to stand by the established tenets of the party as to Russia. Some again would urge with even greater confidence, that their resistance to the Royal Titles Bill in 1876 admits of no defence, when the relation of the Great Mogul and of his successors in India, is historically canvassed. But if both have erred at times in the attempt to lead the present Opposition, it will be always found they did so in conforming to some novel line of thought which Mr. Gladstone had initiated. Might they not fairly plead against extinction, by the quarter, which had brought about the only lapses dangerous to their credit? But it is not merely as the advocate of Lord Granville and Lord Hartington, that I would ask you to reflect upon the nature of the task which has engaged you. The first of these, in the high post of the Duke of Wellington at Walmer Castle, can never want for sedulous adherents. The second, an active and industrious politician, with whom numbers can identify

'The glass of fashion and the mould of form,'

is still more irresistibly defended. It is essential, therefore, to consider in what manner the restoration you promote, would bear on international proceedings. Even if he is free from all reproach, the new official life of Mr. Gladstone would have a bad effect on the recovery of any French alliance. In 1870 he was wholly deaf to M. Thiers; and France is in the hands of those who approximated to M. Thiers when he became, if not the builder, the designer of the republic which exists. Moreover, the friends of the important personage who now presides outwardly over the Chamber, inwardly over the State, have not scrupled to denounce the Eastern policy of Mr. Gladstone as repugnant to the whole conception they have formed of Liberal opinion, which never struck them as endorsing contempt of modern treaties, persecution of a crumbling ally, subserviency to the aggressor who invades him. Deluded as they are perhaps, their delusion would be a bar to any common action Mr. Gladstone might desire to elicit from them. But let us now appraise in some degree, the effect in Russia of the catastrophe you aim at. We may assume—until we are required to

examine that part of the subject—that the activity of the late Prime Minister in foreign matters, since the Bulgarian excitement of 1876, has been a wise and patriotic one. The electors of Midlothian cannot doubt that his return to power—however beneficial in every other aspect—would be accepted as a triumph at St. Petersburg. To sweep together many details it would be too long to handle, one by one, Mr. Gladstone, if only from his conduct at St. James's Hall in December 1876, stands before the ruling persons at St. Petersburg, as the original promoter of a Russian party in Great Britain. Whether it was good or bad, he stands before them as the author of the Black Sea Conference in 1871, by which they first extenuated their defeat in the Crimea, and gained leave to build again upon the ashes of Sebastopol. He stands before them, as the lion in the path of the actual Government, during the whole war of 1877, whenever any measure of precaution or resistance, was forced on its intelligence or conscience. He stands before them also from a recent declaration as the Minister who regarded intimate relations with them, as more desirable, than they would be with any power less aggressive. On these grounds alone—whatever language he now holds—his return to Downing Street would be accepted as a triumph at St. Petersburg. What follows from it? That every scheme and enterprise which it would be a British object to discourage, is precipitated. In a despotic régime, where no limit as to different courses which present themselves arises from the declared opinion of a Press, or the fore-calculated action of a Parliament, or the recorded language of a Government, deliberation is not less prolonged and inexhaustible, than secret. Whether or not such or such an expedition shall be sent to Central Asia; whether or not the line from Merv to Herat shall be occupied; whether or not a new encroachment upon Persia shall be hazarded; whether or not the Bulgarian Prince shall be backed up in any given controversy with the Sultan, may remain in equilibrium up to the very moment of deciding. The appointment in Great Britain of a Minister whom Russia is disposed—even imprudently—to count upon, is a portentous weight gratuitously flung into the scale of her activity and restlessness. But there is something else to be remembered. The chance of giving moderation to the foreign policy of Russia, resides in institutions to control the arbitrary nature of her Government. The return of a British Minister who has seemed to view that arbitrary power with indulgence, who has identified it with the nation it oppresses, who has acceded to its language or been a

sponsor of its virtue, begets in sovereign authority a new and possibly legitimate reluctance to descend and to restrain itself. The event, therefore, we are contemplating has a double tendency: to avert the change by which the foreign policy of Russia may be tempered; to heighten the ambition which it usually displays, and has not lately been exempt from.

So much for the relation of your project to Lord Granville and Lord Hartington, so much for its effect—if carried out—at Paris and St. Petersburg. Instead of dwelling now upon its influence at Berlin, which would clearly be, to paralyse the British Embassy in all its labours for detaching Germany from Russia, or, if they are detached, for barring their reunion—ever imminent—let me at once encounter the most specious ground on which you can defend yourself. It is the financial one. It is assumed that because our fiscal system is deranged, Mr. Gladstone is essential to restore it. As a speaker upon figures he is certainly pre-eminent. In spite of their unnecessary length, Mr. Pitt and Sir R. Peel might have heard with envy the Budget statements he pronounced when under the direction of the Earl of Aberdeen, or of Lord Palmerston. I do not presume to criticise the mode in which he distributed his surpluses. But he has recently explained himself, that for a long time there will not be a surplus to dispose of. The faculty of meeting an emergency, and that of withdrawing burdens, are perfectly distinct from one another. Sir R Peel had to display the former in 1842, and Mr. Pitt from 1793 down to the end of his career, amidst innumerable difficulties.[1] There is no proof that Mr. Gladstone has acquired it. He has another serious impediment, inasmuch as he is doubly pledged to bring about the abolition of the income-tax. To abolish the income-tax and remedy a deficit, are wholly incompatible proceedings, unless a larger revenue is drawn from Customs and Excise. But here, by former policy and language, the latitude of Mr. Gladstone is still more thoroughly restricted. Nothing but a strong, perhaps a morbid, aspiration to bring import duties within the closest limits, could have induced him, as Prime Minister, to remove the shilling duty upon corn, which his great master had intended to perpetuate. I took the trouble once to go into the subject accurately with a baker who came to see me, as an old elector, from the provinces Although a zealot for Free Trade, he soon convinced me that the effect upon the quartern loaf was wholly inappre-

[1] The financial operations of Mr. Pitt have been vividly collected and described by a French author, M. Calmon.

ciable, and not to be exhibited in farthings. And yet 900,000*l.*, or in round numbers a million sterling, were effaced from the revenue. A graver consequence ensued on this improvident and violent disturbance of what Sir R. Peel had settled. Soon after, Mr. Gladstone endeavoured to repair the loss by a duty upon matches, which, having brought a mob to Westminster, and threatened to renew the days of Lord George Gordon, vanished altogether. The two measures irresistibly suggested the comparison of a host, who, having made himself insolvent by a lavish and capricious entertainment, should go out fully armed to restore his funds upon the highway, without, however, calculating the resistance he was destined to encounter, and thus unite the inconveniences of an empty pocket, of a lawless escapade, and a precipitate surrender. You do not need to be reminded that the transaction was the transaction of the Government, and not, as the careless herd of quidnuncs—who find their way sometimes to fashionable drawing-rooms—would assume, of the person then described as Chancellor of the Exchequer, himself appointed by the First Lord of the Treasury, as well as his subordinate in the department which they both of them belonged to. The whole affair created in judicious minds a reasonable doubt how far the financial acumen of Mr. Gladstone had survived. It is at least a sample of his aptitude for meeting a deficiency.

These two considerations would suffice to exclude Mr. Gladstone from another lease of power if patriotism governed. What is there to sway your Lordship or the electors of Midlothian in an opposite direction? There is a vague impression that Mr. Gladstone is an object of legitimate enthusiasm in the party of which, for five years only, he was leader. His speeches have maintained it, and your authority has sanctioned it. To ascertain how far it is well founded we must glance at many parts of his career, as well as more particularly dwell upon the later ones. Far be it from me to touch the buried animosities he kindled, by his youthful, genuine, accomplished, eloquent resistance to the Whig party from 1833 to 1841. He is not to be blamed for beginning official life—he might not otherwise have entered it—when the mistaken fiat of a court had trampled down the wishes of a Parliamentary majority.[1] The more we see of public life, the more we are convinced that men have little choice as to their manner of embarking upon it. Most of us are born to a party as we are born to a religion. Besides, it

[1] 1834—35.

is a law, if not of nature, of society, that between the ages of twenty and thirty, the most gifted men are hurried into folly by the strength of their emotions. If that folly is not contented with the shapes more usually provided for it, it may be allowed a vent, in the elaborate support of doctrines to be afterwards abandoned. So neither is Mr. Gladstone to be blamed at the bar of Liberal opinion for reaching the Colonial Office as a repealer of the Corn Laws he had habitually defended against Mr. Villiers. He was still connected with the leader he preferred to every other. When, however, in 1847 the Peelite group detached themselves, and became, in his own language, 'icebergs unsafe to land on, but perilous to fall into collision with, and then, by a confusion of good images which none but heartless pedants can object to, 'a mass, who like corn in bulk endangered the trim of the ship, by violently oscillating from one side to the other,' he passed into a free agent, highly capable of marring or supporting the Liberal Administration of the time, in several emergencies. The Session of 1850 was remarkable for two of them. Lord John Russell was seriously threatened in the spring by a motion against the blockading squadron on the coast of Africa. So important was the hazard deemed, that the Prime Minister convened his party and harangued them. The Government assured the House of Commons, that the Divine favour would inevitably be withdrawn from the United Kingdom, unless the squadron was continued. In what manner they became possessed of a truth so solemn, is among the secrets of Empire, which Downing Street contains in its illimitable archives. But no one now will impugn the accuracy of their political, whatever he may think as to the soundness of their theological conclusion. In twenty years from that time the blockading squadron triumphed. Its removal would have been a national reproach, if not a national iniquity. To uphold it, was the unavoidable corollary, of the great measure passed by Mr. Fox in 1806, and which contributed to make his death as tranquil, as his life had been illustrious. The whole faculty of Mr. Gladstone was exerted to defeat the Government, to remove the ships, to leave the Slave Trade to impunity, and Africa to darkness. Before this very Session ended, Mr. Gladstone gave another, and indeed a graver sample of his irrepressible antagonism, to the objects Liberal opinion had systematically followed, from the time when Lord Palmerston first approached the Foreign Office. I urge it on your Lordship for two reasons. It betrays his animus when he had reached political maturity. It gives a clue to much which in his recent conduct upon inter-

national affairs, has been the wonder, not to add the scandal, of mankind. At the end of June 1850, the House of Commons had the great debate upon the motion of Mr. Roebuck, to counteract the vote of censure, which the Lords had passed upon Lord Palmerston. The issue was not on the propriety or impropriety of insisting on claims the Greek Government eluded, so much as on the merit or demerit of the line the Foreign Office had pursued for nearly twenty years, in extending further the policy of Mr. Canning against the despotic monarchies of Europe, with which Great Britain had been too closely intermixed during her resistance to the First Napoleon. In the largest sense, over the widest area, the Whig and Tory principles were brought into collision. The speech of Lord Palmerston required four hours and forty minutes to deliver, from the range of the transactions it alluded to. A scholar once explained to me, that it was as much the defence of a general career —up to that moment—as the well-known effort of the Athenian orator in vindicating Ctesiphon. Had Mr. Gladstone only followed Sir Robert Peel—for the last time—with prescient steps into the lobby, no comment would be necessary. Impelled, however, by the force of instinct or conviction, he acquired new credit in debate, as the inexorable scourge of the proceedings, which for years had been directed to establish some responsibility, amongst the Governments of Europe. His language well became the future partisan of Russia, against an Ottoman assembly she had determined to efface.

The union of the Whigs and Peelites under the Earl of Aberdeen and Lord John Russell in 1853, you are well aware, involved an epoch in the party history of Great Britain. For the first time Mr. Gladstone found himself arrayed in form against Conservatives, and sitting nightly amongst Liberals. But still—and it is no impeachment of his honour—he could not renounce the language, fling off the clothes, disguise the preferences, belonging to the Toryism with which his youth and early manhood had been saturated. In the financial statement of that year, which for many qualities deserved the notice of great men, he passed an encomium on Mr. Pitt, which at once drew from Lord John Russell a protest guarded, but emphatic, and led the world to see how far the coalition was from really coalescing. In 1855 he was doomed to administer a still more heavy blow to the cherished objects of the party he had in some degree espoused, or to which at least he was indebted for the post, he had enjoyed during two Sessions. On the accession of Lord Palmerston to the highest office, the whole

Peelite group withdrew, upon the scanty ground, that Lord Palmerston intended to concede—after the fiat of the House of Commons—the inquiry into the condition of the army which the Cabinet had previously resisted. Whether or not the Peelite group was swayed by Mr. Gladstone, or rather, as the world believed, by Sir James Graham, in the hostile action they resolved upon, is wholly immaterial. In a short time Mr. Gladstone was revealed as the true combatant, not against St. Petersburg indeed, but against the system he had quitted. His motions to bring on negotiations before Sebastopol was taken, and after the allies were irredeemably engaged in the heroic enterprise of taking it—conceived in the same spirit as the attempt to lure the squadron from the coast of Africa—are part of the Crimean war, and did nothing to facilitate the labour, although much to enhance the merit, of those who urged it on to a victorious conclusion. His opposition to the articles which guarded the Black Sea, was another blow inflicted on Lord Palmerston and those who were supporting him. It was not until 1857 that in spite of his reiterated eloquence, Mr. Gladstone had sufficient force to put the Government in a minority, and thus bring on a general election. It was not until 1858 that the second Administration of Lord Derby was composed, and none who had watched Mr. Gladstone in the three previous years could wonder that he should be ready, as High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands, to work under it. His adhesion in 1859 to its sinister and uncalled-for effort for overruling or correcting or supplementing the Reform Act—opposed as that effort was by the united body of the Liberals—was even more significant of his propensity to re-enlist, under the banner he had started with. After the general election of 1859, in the division on the Address, he voted, as might have been anticipated, with the Government. It should never be disputed, however, that a fortnight afterwards, by way perhaps of expiating penance, he resolved to serve Lord Palmerston as Chancellor of the Exchequer; and then began a voyage with the Liberals more final and adventurous, than the preliminary cruises, which had hitherto disgusted or estranged him. But we are not to forget that he had passed upwards of five-and-twenty years—the whole career of Mr. Pitt—in which that party was the object, either of his strenuous hostility, his oscillating friendship, or his renovated anger. And here it is essential to remark that in all the stages of his life Mr. Gladstone has possessed the same degree of intellectual maturity. As a speaker, if

tradition is correct, he was as powerful at the University of Oxford as he has been in later times elsewhere, not only over academic youth, but country gentlemen who flocked into the city, to hear the passionate invectives against the Bill of 1832, which they knew how to exult in, and would willingly have emulated. As a debater, he at once attained the suffrage of the House of Commons. As a thinker, he stands no higher now than he did when author of his early treatise on the civil and religious power. It would verge upon the comic, to advance that up to 1859 he was only passing a developing and gradual apprenticeship: that in 1859 at first his stature was revealed: that his case is similar to that of Mr. Fox, whose youth was given to the Tories; of Mr. Pitt, who shone at first among the Whigs; of Mr. Canning, who renounced his earlier connections, and was said by hostile wits 'to turn his jacket,' a phrase which in point of fact acquits the object which it lights upon. He will not either find a shelter in the early history of Lord Beaconsfield, who seemed to lean towards the Radicals, before he entered Parliament, before he reached the power of interpreting himself, or measuring the gulf between his mind and his associates. Lord Palmerston, indeed, was twenty years and upwards with the Tories, but only as a dexterous subordinate. As soon as his mind began to operate, as it did in his great speeches on Portugal and Catholic relief in 1829-30, his new conviction was unvarying. Again—its partisans are forced into admitting it—the claims of a reforming party on adhesion, depend in some degree upon the number of unchecked abuses, of unsettled problems, of unexamined institutions, it is called upon to deal with. If Liberals in 1859 are seen as an object of regard, ten years before they ought to have been cherished, as an object of enthusiasm. Political improvement is not a cup—unless we think it has no bottom—of which a ripe, a strong, and an elaborately cultivated intellect, is free to thirst after the dregs, when it has repelled the substance, and disdained the effervescence. There is nothing further to remark as to the conduct of Mr. Gladstone to the friends and colleagues tardily adopted, down to the death of Lord Palmerston, who might, however, if his correspondence was revealed in full, have much to say upon it. In the autumn of 1865 Mr. Gladstone became the leader of the House of Commons and the immediate organ of the new Prime Minister, Lord Russell, who had quite outlived the native force of his capacity. Essential in the House of Commons, overruling in the Cabinet, and restless in his office, he found himself at last the arbiter of legislative wisdom.

He soon allowed the aged and enfeebled Minister to fall into two gigantic and irreparable errors, against which—and this is the dark feature—a course of ill-starred experiments for nearly fifteen years might easily have warned his mentor and co-adjutor. Mr. Gladstone allowed him to relapse into an extensive project of organic change, from which the ballot was excluded; a project which no necessity required, and which the general election had not whispered a demand for. He allowed him to relapse into the exploded policy of an unguarded but yet a limited descent in the 10*l.* franchise. With such a combination, in 1852, in 1853, in 1860, the House of Commons and the world at large had been irrevocably sickened. The arbitrary choice of 7*l.* as a figure was a biting satire upon all the figures previously adopted. It was without the shadow of a precedent, a principle, an object, or an interest to stand upon. There was no attempt to remedy the ascertained defects in the great Act of 1832, such as the fatal one, that it repeatedly ejected from the Legislature, distinguished men, whom an overpowering majority of the nation would have seated there. There was not an attempt, either, to work into the measure a number of ideas which, ever since the question was disastrously reopened in 1852, time, thought, and philosophical inquiry had brought to bear upon the subject. It was a lamentable instance of 'the dog going back to his vomit.' Under the auspices of Mr. Gladstone, the Minister incapable of any new conception, reproduced the substance which, in 1852, had flung him from his place, which in 1854 had rendered him a laughing-stock, and which in 1860 had been defeated by the voice of Ministerial supporters, by the genuine conviction of the public, and by the known aversion of Lord Palmerston. Attacked on every side, and utterly discredited, at last, in 1866, the Government retired before the 'pulveris exigui jactum' which Lord Dunkellin, a steady Whig and a Crimean officer, administered. Since, indeed, a statue of Lord Dunkellin has been erected in the public square of Galway. It is the sole result which Mr. Gladstone and Lord Russell have bequeathed to the United Kingdom. The working classes—wholly tranquil in 1865—had been excited. A Tory Government was formed under a necessity of handling, and yet with an unlimited control over, a topic vital to the Crown and to the Empire. You can hardly urge that in this stage of his career Mr. Gladstone much enhanced the obligation of the Liberals.

But you will tell me he redeemed himself at last; that he framed a Government in 1868; and then became the object of

a gratitude which cannot be exhausted. It would ill become me to disparage the whole career of the late Government, of which, in common with the party and yourself, I was a general supporter;—an undeviating friend so long as the Earl of Clarendon belonged to it. Mr. Gladstone may deserve acknowledgment from Liberals for his measures on the Irish Church, the ballot, education, and not the less because the two first involved a sacrifice of the opinions he had hitherto adhered to. The attempt to readjust the ties of the Irish occupier and the Irish landlord was well meant, was plausibly sustained, elaborately fashioned in detail, although the present autumn is a record of its absolute inanity. Let it be granted that Mr. Gladstone deserved well of the Liberals down to the death of the Earl of Clarendon, which the war of France and Germany immediately succeeded. It was manifest to all who had studied foreign policy before the war began, that it threatened Great Britain wherever she had treaties to defend, which means principally in Belgium, Portugal, and the Ottoman Empire. Belgium and Portugal escaped, while on the Ottoman Empire the storm, with much rapidity and turbulence, descended. The intimation of Prince Gortchakoff that he resolved to trample on the settlement of 1856 was met at first in no improper manner by the Foreign Office and Lord Granville. But that despatch was not supported by the second one. What happened in the interval, will hardly be cleared up till Mr. Otway, the Under-Secretary, makes his revelations to the public. The resignation of the Under-Secretary from inability to defend the conduct of his leaders, is the fact to be interpreted, and let me add the protest which as yet has never been successfully encountered. We only know that a special mission to Versailles was resolved upon; while a particular and powerful appeal to Austria as our co-signatary in the guarantee of April 15, 1856, was the course which obvious duty called for. The mission to Versailles—consigned to an excellent diplomatist, whose language, noble and correct, the Prime Minister repudiated in the House of Commons—was not entirely inexcusable. But it is always perilous to quit a path which is obligatory, for one which is spontaneous and invented. Great Britain was in no manner bound to appeal to Prussia, in a more emphatic form than she employed to all the other signataries of March 30, 1856. She was bound to appeal to Austria more conspicuously on the ground of the second treaty, as she would have been bound to appeal to France in the same manner, if France had not been clearly and exceptionally paralysed. The mission to Versailles, which

might have supplemented the performance of a task mapped out in our engagements, was unfortunately substituted for it. As weakness gravitates to strength, Mr. Gladstone sought a refuge with Count Bismarck. It has reached me from a decisive source, that Austria was prepared to take an energetic measure in our favour, and also that the Foreign Office knew it. I have it from authority as good, that if a tone of firmness had continued, Russia was prepared to back out altogether from her vain and vaunting outrage, on the Powers which met in 1856. Count Bismarck—whom Mr. Gladstone raised into an arbiter—was so situated and so pledged that he could not think of thwarting Russia for a moment. The Conference was granted; and the restrictions of the Black Sea virtually abandoned, before green baize was fitted to the Council-table. The defence is perfectly familiar to me. It is said that although the power of Russia to navigate the Black Sea was a loss, the power of Great Britain to send a fleet into the Dardanelles in time of peace, with the concurrence of the Porte, was an outbalancing advantage. If the defence was valid then, a few years afterwards it shivered into atoms, when the fleet, so far from going up in time of peace, required six months of war to overcome its hesitation. It may, however, be admitted, that the calamity of the affair, resided less in the new power Russia had extorted than in the measure of Great Britain she had taken. It might not suit her to build ships for the Black Sea, or call her arsenals out of their ruin, but she convinced herself that the treaties of 1856 might be defied, and has not ceased to profit by the lesson. The loss of British reputation was incalculable. The press of Europe, of America, indeed of the whole world, denounced the pusillanimous conclusion which sowed the war of 1877. The seed and harvest may be traced alike to Mr. Gladstone.

As regards the kind of military panic which followed the campaign of 1870, and led Mr. Gladstone into schemes he would not otherwise have dreamt of, it is a scanty title to the gratitude of Liberals to have raised Sir Charles Trevelyan—the enthusiast of a specific measure—into an absolute dictator; to have turned a deaf ear to the sober counsels of Lord Dalhousie, the right hand of our party in the Crimean War; to have abolished purchase without a system of retirement on the one hand, without the sanction of the Legislature on the other; to have imposed an annual expenditure which made the object of the public—an augmented force—more unattainable than ever. The Treaty of Washington needs but a passing notice. Its defiance of public law in the construc-

tion of new rules to supersede that law, before an arbitrating body, has been long ago established. The only point I deem it right to urge upon you is, that in resolving to send commissioners to Washington Mr. Gladstone utterly renounced the attitude which Liberals had chosen, and gave up the whole battle which, directly after the civil war was over, Lord Russell and Lord Clarendon, as organs of the party, had conducted with a zeal, a pertinacity, and subtlety, so eminent as to silence the American demand and always place them high in the diplomacy of Europe. The whole correspondence has been reproduced in a small volume, and is easily accessible. It is a school for politicians required to deal with the vicissitudes of maritime adventure. On this subject it was the doom of Mr. Gladstone to rob the party of its triumph, and lure the nation into voluntary paths, of contradiction first, of sacrifice eventually. But let us quit the sphere of foreign policy. The nomination of Sir Robert Collier, which excited so much clamour at the time, may be defended on the ground that a learned and accomplished partisan ought, from time to time, to be rewarded at the cost of a disputed or ambiguous legality. The minister who so rewards, at least displays his courage and his gratitude together. The same indulgence cannot be extended to the prodigality with which, in quarters perfectly obscure—unless wealth is an irradiating element—the honours deemed to flow from royalty were lavished. True, indeed, to the idolatry of Mr. Pitt he had betrayed in 1853,[1] but forgetting that Earl Grey, Lord Melbourne, and Lord John Russell were more immediately or more officially his predecessors, the late Prime Minister determined that baronetcies should be showered in the gross, while peerages were offered by the dozen; that when the modesty or lassitude of the country gentleman, recoiled from the advances which pursued him, the permanent official should be disguised in a magnificent costume, compelled to swear over the table, annexed to faction, taught to whisper in debate, and part with the sublime neutrality by which his life had heretofore been elevated. But the blow to former principle and former practice was as grave, as the experiment was calculated to move the smiles of those, who draw amusement from the passing forms of ministerial necessity. The permanent official has been taught to regard the peerage as the natural conclu-

[1] During the Government of Mr. Addington, Mr. Pitt, in conversation with his niece, deplored the error as to patronage into which his inexperience had led him, and thus divested it of his authority.—See "Memoirs of Lady Hester Stanhope."

sion of his labours. He must either at the outset of his civil life attach himself to party, and thus render it impossible for all Governments with equal cordiality and confidence to utilise his services, or else he must incur suspicion of taking up opinions he is utterly indifferent, possibly opposed to, in order to arrive at outward accord with the men to whom he owes a Parliamentary existence. If you reflect, you will at once observe that the objection does not bear with equal force upon the case of sailors, soldiers, and diplomatists. But if it did, traditionary evils are not a plea for new irregularities, by which the State must be the loser. To return to Mr. Gladstone his last measure was to plant in the House of Lords the greater part of a new bench, it might not have been so easy to set up, had the impending lash of a Whig censor, the Duke of Somerset, been even distantly anticipated. It must never be forgotten that a Minister, when he becomes profuse instead of chary in such favours, is undermining the monarchical as well as the aristocratic virtue of the British Constitution. He has first to paralyse the Crown, in order quietly and smoothly to degrade the hierarchy which upholds it. Some years ago I lighted on a curious expression in the 'Memoirs of Sir John Dalrymple,' a work well known in Scotland, as regards the period of 1688, or rather that which closely followed it. During the absence of William III. in Ireland and the regency of Mary, a set of politicians who desired to bring their views before Her Majesty, complained bitterly of others more immediately surrounding her, that the latter 'were locking up the Queen.' The art of 'locking up the Queen,' and for the time annihilating Royalty, is one which Mr. Gladstone seemed to bring to absolute perfection. To come to the last stage, will any one contend that in dissolving Parliament in January 1874 the interest and honour of his adopted party were consulted? Was not the programme of abolishing the income-tax—whether wise or unwise in the abstract—calculated to secure defeat from a body of electors of which the large, preponderating number are exempt from it? Could such a train of reasoning have possibly escaped him? Had he to learn that a scheme which might have been acceptable under the Act of 1832 involved an unavoidable disaster when that Act was superseded? At this crisis he merits praise indeed for his repudiation of the leadership. A defeat surpassing every other in its ruin, occasioned by an error of which the madness was unprecedented, could not be otherwise atoned for. Had all his colleagues—who partook the error—shared

in the atonement, the fortunes of the party might have been more easy to recover.

Let me proceed to ask you, since his fall from power and his abdication as a leader, has he acted in such a manner as to deserve the crown you are industriously preparing for him? Let it be granted that he became emancipated from the convictions and traditions of the party he had handed over—so far as it depended on his transfer—to another. Let it be granted he was free to wander in the Russian paths which in his youth the higher Tories had affected, and some are faithful to at present; to connive at the intrigues by which the Bulgarian disturbances had been created; to assume that the Sultan had made a war against his subjects to exterminate them, instead of having quelled an insurrection organised for driving him from Europe. Let it be granted he was free to raise by public and conspicuous homage the prestige of the Russian emissary sent here to debauch Great Britain from allegiance to the treaties she had fought for; to drive Lord Salisbury, as far as he could do it, into the arms of General Ignatieff; to stifle Ottoman attempts at freedom in their cradle; to lure the Czar over the Pruth by every guarantee that no resistance on the part of Western Europe would impede him; to overawe a timid Foreign Office who would, had he permitted it, at once have sent the British fleet into the Dardanelles; to impede the preparations by which alone the Congress of Berlin had any prospect of reversing the encroachments he had fostered, and exulted in. Let all this be conceded, while on the other hand it is denied, that he was justified in making the party he had disengaged, responsible for his unhappy aberration, from the path suggested by the honour of Great Britain, and the interest of Europe. But this is what he has done. In nearly every speech he has identified himself with the late Government, and the connected body of the Opposition. In nearly every phase of his original and self-inspired extravagance, he has assumed to be the organ of the Liberals. Has he at any time acknowledged the existence of men in unison and concert with the virtuous and enlightened Under Secretary, who stigmatised him in the zenith of his power? Has he remembered that any members of the Opposition two years before he ventured to approach the Eastern Question had been sedulously working at it, in the sense and on the principles Lord Palmerston bequeathed to them? Has he admitted that while he laboriously sheltered the new Holy Alliance, other Liberals had eagerly denounced it? What is the result? He has not indeed succeeded in establishing

the Czar upon the Bosphorus. The tardy influence of Europe: the tardy preparation of the Government; or, if you will, the long-suspended hand of Providence has checked him. He has succeeded in identifying the terms of Liberal and Russian before the mass of the electors. He has exposed his recent party to the derision of the Continent. He has afforded to a garrulous, a weak, and falsely plumed Administration, the very refuge which they wanted, by enabling them to vaunt over the country, that in following him more closely, they would have reached a lower depth of error than their own. It is always open to them to remark, that they have never so far alienated national opinion, as to require defence from the police, or to be precluded from appearing before meetings not exclusively selected; while such has been in 1878 the fate of Mr. Gladstone. If in connection with this topic we call to mind the efforts of the late Prime Minister to array the Opposition against the Royal Titles Act—on grounds too futile to be again disposed of—we cannot but admit that the essence of his tactics, consisted in making them responsible for any conduct he might venture on; and thus at the same moment an object of aversion to the Court and of resentment to the people.

You cannot, therefore, urge that since 1874 Mr. Gladstone has done anything to regain the gratitude of Liberals. We come, therefore, to his speeches in Midlothian, and try to ascertain, with coolness, how far they are a title to the supremacy demanded. Let me assure your Lordship that I am one of the few persons in the United Kingdom who has diligently read them, a course of labour you have obviously imposed upon me, which neither the avidity for knowledge nor hope of wisdom would have easily suggested. My first intention was to comment upon each of them in order, but they are so far from being divided in their topics, or consecutive in their arrangement, that such a method would, besides prolixity, have involved going backwards and forwards, from finance to European matters, from European matters to finance, a process, men of taste like yours, are sure to be impatient of, and not the less from having recently submitted to it. Their overwhelming mass may nearly all be judged under three categories: the arraignment of the Government; the attempt to frame a legislative programme for the Liberals; the delineation of ideas on foreign policy, which Mr. Gladstone for the welfare of mankind, determined to promulgate. The arraignment of the Government, however just and able in finance, is nearly cancelled by a deficiency gigantic in itself,

and yet for Mr. Gladstone unavoidable. It actually condones the whole of their inaction from April 1877 down to the Treaty of San Stephano, and thus the infidelity to treaties which brought the Russian armies to the outskirts of Constantinople, and Great Britain to the verge of war, when even war might have been useless. The flood of accusation which has deluged Scotland is also a colossal waterproof against another stream of argument, at once legitimate, unanswerable, easy to produce, and therefore fatal to the Government. No Opposition ever yet succeeded, no Opposition was entitled to succeed, which flung away the most effective of its weapons. 'Pour être véritablement grand, il faut profiter de toute sa fortune,' is a French maxim of wide and varied application. Without desiring to save them, Mr. Gladstone is, in point of fact, the most ingenious advocate the Government possesses. Again, next to acquittal of what is wholly indefensible, there cannot be a greater service to a Government than to assail it by reproaches which are easy to encounter. On two themes he has conspicuously done so. He has recurred to the long-exploded accusation that the Berlin Memorandum of 1876 was a judicious and disinterested project, hastily rejected. As in reference to this point Mr. Gladstone thinks proper to array himself against every diplomatist in Europe who was not forced to work for the Holy Alliance, against Lord Derby, who has often vindicated the conclusion he arrived at, against every speaker in either House of Parliament who deserves the least attention in international affairs, against the 'Edinburgh' and 'Quarterly' Reviews (so far as I remember them), against the Andrassy Note, which, if it had any value, condemns the Berlin Memorandum, and still more if it had none; against common sense, which teaches that when the Ottoman Empire is violently shaken, it does not become Great Britain to endorse what Russia has dictated; I will not venture to fatigue you by reopening the detail of the question. I assume, well knowing you will grant, that on this point the Government can ever advantageously defend themselves. What, therefore, can be more reckless in the way of tactics, than to give them further opportunities of doing so? In another form, the same class of error is repeated. Mr. Gladstone incessantly reproaches Lord Beaconsfield for not abridging the duration of the Parliament, for allowing it to run too near the limit fixed in the Septennial Act. The answer wholly overwhelms the accusation, which thus insures an easy triumph to the Government. If Prime Ministers are justified in leaving the Septennial Act unexecuted, in all the range it offers, according to their own discretion and conve-

nience, how much more are they excusable in conforming to the whole direction of the Statute Book? The Septennial Act was introduced to lengthen Parliaments, which had been previously triennial, and not to shorten them, as would have been the case had they originally lapsed at the conclusion of a decade. That a series of Governments having acted in a certain manner, no future Government may venture to depart from it, is a tenet which the member for Newark in 1833 might very naturally favour, which in the mouth of the established tribune, and of the sceptic on the rights of property, is inconsistent and preposterous. According to this doctrine no Government can dare, without reiterated obloquy, to absent itself from a Greenwich banquet as the Session closes. But the late Government, defying the practice of half a century, and the recorded judgment of many grave and pious statesmen, determined to absent itself from these occasions year by year, and to approach the hazards of the long vacation, without a furtive glance over the Isle of Dogs to renovate its wisdom. But was the policy of the Septennial Act erroneous? Was the parting benediction of Lord Somers to those who had just carried it, a proof that age had conquered, or sagacity had quitted him? Mr. Gladstone, who would utterly renounce the Whig party of that day, is quite at liberty to think so. Why, therefore, did he not correct it? When in 1865 he united with Lord Russell to force organic change upon an Empire known to be averse to it, what more innocuous scheme could he have hazarded? As the head of a Government for five years, why did he not attempt it? Is it the essence of the Constitution that law shall authorise one term for the duration of a Parliament, and fashion make another rigorously binding? The language which elicits answers such as these, and possibly much better ones, is not appropriate to one who would aspire to have the Opposition in his custody. But there is another ground on which such language should have been jealously avoided. Suppose it had the real effect at which it aims, of hastening a general election. Suppose that general election happened to produce a new Conservative majority. What deep responsibility, would not Mr. Gladstone have incurred to the party which he used to lead, and still affects to be the organ of? The most accomplished judges of constituencies, the local experts to whom he cannot venture to compare himself, doubt as to the upshot of any general election at this moment. The prominence which Mr. Gladstone—under your direction—is assuming has added vastly to the hopes and chances of the Government. Confiding in his judgment on

the disposition of the country, Mr. Gladstone did precipitate a general election which decimated his supporters, or rather overthrew them in battalions, and banished them in regiments from the Legislature. Confiding on the same question in a judgment so thoroughly rebuked by the event, and disciplined by nothing but a course of passion in the interim, he labours to precipitate another general election, which may prolong for twenty years the régime he abhors. But, if you like, assume the justice of his estimate. What ground is there for hurrying the trial? Should the electors lean towards the Opposition, when only fragments of their case, and those immersed in vicious matter, are presented to them, will the electors suddenly renounce the Opposition, when the whole indictment in their grasp is disentangled and exhibited, which it has never been, which it can never be, from any quarter Mr. Gladstone has infected? As regards his speeches to arraign the Government and to extort a dissolution, you will not easily maintain that your candidate has merited the gratitude of Liberals.

We pass on to the speeches which are intended more or less to reveal the action of the party in the future. It is no reproach at all to Mr. Gladstone that he cannot draw an obvious line of demarcation between Conservative and Liberal at present. When the sea has covered the foreshore, the sea and the foreshore are unavoidably confounded. It is not any prodigy,, but what judicious men would have anticipated, that after general ascendancy for nearly fifty years, Liberal opinion should have won, all round the circle of political debate, the objects it was seeking. The internal battle-field is harder to discern, when such a consummation is arrived at. Liberals are not bound—as some imagine—to devise problems, but to settle them, when all the world is thoroughly aware of their existence. It is not their office to invent evils for a Government to handle, but when evils have been found to see that Governments dispose of them. Nor would I urge that if Mr. Gladstone had a series of legislative projects in his mind, it was his duty to reveal a single one to the electors. There is not any legislative scheme which Liberals could favour, and which the Tory party might not suddenly resolve upon initiating, under their present guidance, in their present temper, and in their present composition. On this point experience is ample, even when the Tories were less adventurous and educated, than Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury have made them. It is true indeed that there are certain great imperial necessities or exigencies, relating to our military system, to popular instruction, and to Ireland, which any speaker who harangues

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Midlothian for a fortnight as a candidate for power, might feel an obligation to advert to, without too much developing the mode in which he would respond to them. Copious as he is, Mr. Gladstone has not touched upon them. However, reticence is so much more the ornament and virtue of a statesman than expression, that he ought not, perhaps, to lose a vote on that account. The matter of regret is, that Mr. Gladstone overlooks the fact that Liberal and Conservative no longer stand in the relation they have stood in, or, seeing it, that he labours to create battle-fields which only give advantage to the latter. In this spirit he has discussed agrarian concerns without the *locus standi* of acquaintance with the law upon real property, without the *locus standi* of respect for what the greatest masters of political economy have settled. How far in the abstract the State is more entitled to invade land than to appropriate the sheep, the horses, and the implements upon it, is really very immaterial. Whenever it begins, it will require, and it will most likely have, a Cromwell to restrain it. Such measures—if theoretically just—have not the faintest tendency to remove distress, as they estrange capital from the field in which it is desirable. But to remove distress would be their only vindication. They tend immediately to deprive Great Britain, as they have denuded France, of a proprietary body rich enough to carry on the business of political assemblies, without salary. When our political assemblies are reduced to such a level, who will guarantee them? The public man who associates the Liberals with doubtful schemes, with crude ideas, and propositions easy to assail, is giving Tories all the vantage ground they aim at. What is the natural desire of a Tory leader? It is to see the Liberals attacking institutions he can easily defend, and thus, while he upholds the institution, vindicate his right to the direction of the country. Nothing but a genuine undeviating loyalty to public interests, can ever be a bar to the discomfiture of Liberals. If by attacking from conviction Liberals bring obloquy and hazard on the Governments they form, by attacking from convenience—or the purpose of uniting elements which might be otherwise discordant—they are absolutely ruined. Mr. Gladstone may well forget that the party which he joined in 1859 as Chancellor of the Exchequer, ever since the time of Charles II. has stood upon the basis, not only of improvement, but of high-mindedness and patriotism. Directly it advances schemes, extemporises doctrines, with a view to benefit itself, its enemies are irresistibly triumphant. It puts on the very face with which for generations, they have studied to identify it. Unless debate existed, it might not indeed be so. A faction—if debate

was absent—might consolidate itself in offering a scheme which it despised, or which its leaders looked on with abhorrence, and yet elude the castigation and exposure which it merited. But debate—in spite of all its inconveniences, its animosities and vices, in spite of its consuming tax upon the energy of statesmen, who might be working at their offices—has the advantage that in the end, assisted by the Press, it must establish a preponderance of argument. Bills organised to suit a party may indeed be carried, but in the long run are fatal to their authors. Again, upon another ground, the mode of acting Mr. Gladstone has insinuated, is utterly repugnant to the essence and the history of the party. They have cherished as a function, to make the Statute Book incorporate the doctrines which the most enlightened thinkers, remote from all the heat and dust of public conflict, had established. Mainly by the conduct of the Liberals, Adam Smith, Malthus, Nassau Senior, Bentham to some extent—as he blended many truths with many errors—have become directing pilots in the spheres respectively belonging to them. But a party which habitually appropriates the ripest tenets of scientific politicians cannot—without surrendering its nature—build upon the opposite material of half-digested thought, or of unreasoning conception, which the minds I have alluded to would be the first to sentence and to castigate. A party cannot at the same time make it their political vocation to raise the Statute Book to something higher than the level it has gained, and bring it down to something evidently lower. But Mr. Gladstone has committed a still graver error in his effort to delineate the future action of the Liberals. He has led the whole world to think that on the question most vital to the hearths, the homes, and interests of Scotland, the men he would affect to guide are utterly indifferent. He is not ready to maintain the Church of Scotland, and he is not ready to destroy it. Its friends and enemies are equally at liberty to vote for him. Let me give no opinion here as to the set of arguments in favour of national establishments in general, diffused by the great Dr. Chalmers, or the set of arguments combined against them, by the incomparable Vinet. The point to be remembered is, that in everything which recommends a national establishment to favour, the Church of Scotland is at least superior to any which the world possesses at this moment. It enjoys the approbation of the masses, and to a great extent the confidence of sectaries. Its doctrines are well sifted, its endowments moderate, its ministers exemplary, while its pulpit is a school for congregations to improve, for orators to learn in. If, therefore, the Church of

Scotland is destroyed, no other national religion can be easily perpetuated. The voluntary principle must then become predominant in Europe. It will be seen how far it can be reconciled with monarchy, with which as yet it has not co-existed. The change may be a beneficial or disastrous one. But that a party—through Mr. Gladstone—should declare an absolute indifference as to whether in the United Kingdom and in Europe churches stand or fall, and thus declaring, challenge the approval of Midlothian, may not be a course devoid of reason and of shame, but is at least the course, which the Conservatives may well exult, in drawing from their adversaries. It enables them to say, they are resisting those, who on the most momentous problems, are avowedly incompetent, and virtually unprincipled. In all, therefore, which relates to future action in domestic policy, Mr. Gladstone has done little in his speeches to engage the suffrage of the Liberal elector.

We come, therefore, to the last of the categories I submitted to you, and approach the speeches or the passages in which foreign policy is handled. But in this domain, however interesting to myself, I shall be brief, as, from events to which I have referred, connected with the time when he was Premier, connected with the time when he had abdicated, and yet habitually claimed the Opposition as his followers, the credit of Mr. Gladstone has so deeply suffered, that both you and the electors, will in some degree anticipate me. But certain propositions or assumptions deserve at once to challenge our attention. Mr. Gladstone dwells with confidence on a tenet as mischievous to States, as it is convenient to the persons who direct them, to the effect that foreign and domestic policy should be considered as the rival terms of a perpetual antithesis. If we accept him as our mentor, a nation must be prepared to sacrifice the one, and cannot hope to flourish or exert itself in both of them together. To secure prosperity to legislation and finance, he would remit everything international to the obscurity in which the lustre of the female sex resides, so far as Pericles appraised it; without the previous judgment of Aspasia to direct him. The mode of thinking, is convenient to those who govern States, since it at once enables them to make their vigour or successes in internal policy an excuse for everything ambiguous, profligate, or feeble in external; to make splendour in diplomacy, alliances, and battle-fields a cover for neglecting higher interests (and such there are, perhaps) immediately around them. It is no less mischievous to States themselves, as it obliges them to be contented with one form of action, when two forms of action may be essential to their objects.

The refutation of the tenet lies in the whole history of the United Kingdom from 1830 to 1852. That period embraces the career of Lord Palmerston as Foreign Secretary, which friends and enemies alike regard as fertile, energetic, and adventurous. It embraces such a flow of legislative change as had never occurred before, and could not, from its own extent, have subsequently happened. It embraces the reduction of the estimates to the amount of 1835, which Mr. Gladstone has so frequently referred to as the ideal and golden standard of financiers. After that, Mr. Gladstone has insisted on the virtue of an European concert, utterly fantastic and original, remote at least from everything for which, as yet, diplomacy has laboured. The essence and the soul of European concerts has ever been to guard against an European danger. His system is, to blend into the concert the very Power against which the concert is appropriate. Do you require me to give examples of the European concert founded in the sense I have adverted to? There are many near and many at a distance. In 1863 the European concert which Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell had industriously prepared, endeavoured at St. Petersburg to adjust the differences of Russia and of Poland. In 1856 the European concert registered its victories. In 1854 the European concert organised its forces. To go back to an older peril, in 1804–5 Mr. Pitt spent days and nights in reconstructing against the First Napoleon the European concert which the sun of Austerlitz dissolved into its elements, but which, after ten years, was doomed to triumph at Vienna. No sooner had he vanquished at the Boyne, than William III. framed the European concert, which after many struggles and reverses, at last obtained a breathing-time at Ryswick; while nearly on his death-bed he formed again the European concert which brought the Duke of Marlborough to Blenheim, and for so long a time identified Lord Bolingbroke with Utrecht. If you are ready for another backward step into the past, let me remind you that in the Thirty Years' War—of which the memory is fresh at Berlin in our time—the European concert which included Sweden, France, and all the Protestants of Germany, upheld the Reformation against the House of Austria, eager to destroy it. The type of European concert Mr. Gladstone recommends to Scotland, is wholly strange and diametrically opposite in this way, that his type would overthrow the balance against encroaching Power, while the former type assiduously created such a balance. According to his theory, Austria in the seventeenth century, France in the eighteenth century, Russia in the nineteenth century were all to be

admitted to the concert which in successive periods their restlessness occasioned. Confine your view to our own epoch, lest too much mental dissipation should obscure it. Let us assume that Russia is pacific, scrupulous, forbearing or preoccupied. In that case an European concert is unnecessary. Let us assume that Russia is aggressive. Can any force of eloquence induce her to be the loyal member of a concert to enchain and to intimidate her movements? Mr. Gladstone would aspire to organise the larger Powers of Europe indiscriminately. For what object, can he indiscriminately organise them, except for that of menacing the smaller ones? It is the very system which the great Empires inaugurated at Troppau and Laybach, which Mr. Canning, reaching power in 1822, defeated at Verona. Such tenets ought to be revolting to the Liberal opinion of your county. But let me do their author justice. Among the fundamental doctrines he announces is the grave one, that nations ought to be preserved; and in itself it merits lively approbation. But how would he preserve them? By removing every check upon the peril which in different forms, across the Middle Ages and since the downfall of the Roman Empire, has not ceased to overhang them. You may perhaps remind me that for half a century from 1453, the Ottoman dominion was itself the danger to be guarded against. If you do, I shall at once admit it, and only beg you in return to convince your gifted candidate, that it is not against that dominion, European or Asiatic Powers are now required to secure themselves. It was the part of Quixote to confound the present and the past, to see the giant in the windmill, to take up arms against the vanished and the obsolete. And here let me observe on foreign policy in general that, in spite of its remarkable complexity in forms, negotiations, interests, and public law which has to be appealed to, as regards the end to be pursued, its no less singular lucidity. It is but a method of preventing dangerous wars, and of upholding every State against unscrupulous ascendancy. But as the mind of Mr. Gladstone has never grasped this fundamental truth, his deviations from it are perpetual. It has frequently occurred to me, that his stock of international harangues for the last few years ought to be ranked together with the metaphysics of Lord Bolingbroke. Both in another sphere had been admired and recognised as masters; both were discontented with their laurels and attainments; both resolved upon a flight, as Lord Chesterfield has put it of his friend, 'extra flammantia mœnia mundi,' but far at least beyond the range of their habitual experience and ordinary labours. Both in so doing were

hurried into treason to the party they had formerly directed. Lord Bolingbroke attacked the Church and creed without which the Tories could not have existed. Mr. Gladstone fawned upon the Power, against which Liberals must ever be arrayed, until the transformation of its spirit, its policy, or government has happened. But this is merely a parenthesis, and might some day be treated more exactly. Before we quit the category which engages us, two more remarks are indispensable. In all his language upon Europe, Mr. Gladstone has declined to acknowledge the existence of the new Holy Alliance as a lever in the Eastern Question. If, from his utter inattention to the subject down to the spring of 1876, the union of Austria, Germany, and Russia, announced in their own despatch of October 20, 1874, escaped him altogether, with what face can he pretend to guide the world in these transactions? If, knowing, he connives at the sinister influence which openly betrayed itself, in what light ought men of honour to regard him? But there is something further to be noted. In the only speech I am entitled to refer to as regards the very language it contains, the Rectorial Address, which is reprinted by himself, without the least qualification he holds up to the scorn of a youthful and unpractised audience 'the Ottoman despotism' which he beyond all other men has striven to perpetuate. If, indeed, the movement of the Softas, if the fall of Mahmoud Nedim, if the suicide of Abdul Aziz, if the formation of political assemblies at Constantinople have not established the free government they manifestly tended to, what has happened to defeat them? After an interval of prorogation, the assemblies resumed debate, some time before the Russian armies were established at San Stephano. The first step of the invader was to send a messenger and bring about their dissolution. This step was not, indeed, the fiat of your candidate, but he encouraged actively the war of which it was the outcome, and did his utmost to discredit the constitution which it stifled. It is not usual for public men to denounce the evils for which they are immediately accountable, and thus disguise their origin from all but the initiated. But this inaccuracy is circuitous, as in point of fact a despotic system—overruled by embassies, and mitigated by diplomacy—is now prevailing in the territory of the Sultan. Before he finished, Mr. Gladstone resolved on one far more direct, more startling, more barefaced. At Chester, in the crowning speech—as he was moving to his fireside—he openly declared that infidelity to treaties could not be imputed to the Government up to the time when they were quitted by Lord Carnarvon and Lord

Derby. As well might he have screwed his courage to affirm that the Crimean War had ended without treaties; that Lord Clarendon had never been in Paris in March and April, 1856; and that the Congress usually referred to, is nothing but a fabulous invention. I do not touch on this extraordinary statement to show how recklessly the Opposition have been denuded of the arms which might have made them irresistible, as I have already drawn your attention to that circumstance. It is mentioned only to enable the electors to determine how far the late Prime Minister can be accepted as a witness of political transactions.

There was a time when Mr. Gladstone might have deemed the function of an orator to truth, to be the function of a knight errant to beauty—if beggared, to adorn; if captive, to release; if persecuted, to defend; if overthrown, to restore it. It is the task of others now to disentangle it from such a mass of fiction and of sophistry, as none but he would have the power to impose. Can he escape the melancholy reprimand which ought to be familiar to him, as he has cited in the North another line of the epistle it belongs to?—

> Cœpisti melius quam desinis; ultima primis
> Cedunt————

His expressions upon foreign policy will hardly, therefore, recommend him to the Liberal electors of Midlothian.

No doubt a general impression has arisen throughout Scotland, that these efforts ought to win him back the power he has forfeited. No doubt they seem more captivating to the hearers than the readers. Some, without any reference to what has been presented to their intellect, are ready to support him on the ground of his endurance and exertion having passed the limit which any speaker in the United Kingdom, however young, could have submitted to, or hazarded. No subject of the Queen is less inclined than I am to disparage the union of mental and physical activity. It ought, however, to be proved that the direction is a good one, before they justly challenge the esteem and confidence of a respectable constituency. They do not fall under the head of merit if the direction is a bad one. Let us suppose that it is neither good nor bad, but merely neutral in its character. A candidate has travelled miles in the inclement air, and spoken volumes at the end of every journey for a fortnight, under the auspices of one who understands the nicest duties of a trainer. If the proceeding is abstracted from all results to the community, on what level does it place him? It places him exactly on the level of the

American pedestrian who last spring astonished England by unheard-of walks and public lectures in the halls of every city he arrived at. As they were not made known beyond the local press, we cannot judge his intellectual performances. Let it be granted that they were far beneath the utterances of the former statesman. But as to physical exertion there is no comparison between them. As to mental effort under disadvantage and fatigue, the palm belongs without a doubt to the American. Should he become President of the United States in virtue of his feats, you may contend in virtue of his own, that Mr. Gladstone is entitled to control the public business of Great Britain; but then only when you satisfy the world that the two kinds of feat were equally innocuous. It should not be forgotten either, that in the Transatlantic office, Weston has not already been convicted, of a tendency to overthrow his friends, and to humiliate his country.

If, however, anyone disputes with so much freedom as I have done the aptitude of Mr. Gladstone in international affairs, the electors of Midlothian may demand a further explanation, and inquire in what manner such incredulity is reconciled with the admission of his force as an interpreter of Homer, an expounder of theology, and many other subjects. The answer is at hand, since long reflection has prepared it. Mr. Gladstone has attempted to combine functions which, since the Revolution of 1688, have always been divided. Great Britain for two centuries has seen a set of public men employed upon finance, a set on foreign policy. Charles Montague, Sir Robert Walpole, Charles Townshend, Mr. Pitt, Mr. Huskisson, Sir Robert Peel illustrate the first series; Lord Bolingbroke, Lord Chesterfield, Lord Chatham, Lord Grenville, Mr. Canning, Lord Palmerston have given continuity and splendour to the other. The brevity of life, the necessary limits of acquirement, will not allow the branches to be joined, unless by habits of seclusion which involve the loss of even more important knowledge in a leading man—the knowledge of himself and those he has to influence or deal with. Defying such traditionary prudence, Mr. Gladstone has resolved on grasping things which militate against each other. Beyond that, in foreign policy he is disqualified by a sentiment which, wholly unavowed, is far beyond the range of hasty politicians to observe, but does not cease on that account to rule and darken his conclusions. It is, the undying force of that antagonism to Lord Palmerston which, in 1850, he did not scruple to embody. It is true, indeed, that in later years the antagonism was thoroughly reciprocated, and thus more likely to endure

in the survivor. I am far from indiscriminate approval of Lord Palmerston in all the various transactions which engaged his marvellous resources. He had not, perhaps, the subtlety, the dignity, the caution of his immortal leader, Mr. Canning. In the choice of agents he was sometimes impetuous to the verge of rashness. By far his most successful era belongs to the first decade of his influence, from 1830 to 1841. In the Spanish marriages of 1846, in the vicissitudes of 1848, he cannot be entirely defended; although the errors were redeemed in 1850 by his speech, in 1851 by the pre-eminent sagacity which led to our alliance with Napoleon and drove its author from the Foreign Office.[1] With these exceptions, it may prudently be held, that no public man who is not saturated with his thoughts, and modelled by his character, can properly replace him in the element in which he was supreme, not only from native talent, but opportunities of gaining knowledge accorded to none who went before him, and unlikely to belong to any of his successors. To put it shortly—as Lord Palmerston can never be the lamp of Mr. Gladstone, he will always be his stumbling-block. The next impediment is easy to remark and not entirely discreditable. During a long part of his career Mr. Gladstone was, inclined to a particular depreciation and distrust of his own powers, sustained by an exaggerated deference for all the quasi-leaders who surrounded him. Not only Sir Robert Peel, but the Earl of Aberdeen and Sir James Graham had the superior and fascinating charm over his mind which the Head Master of Eton or the Dean of Christ Church are thought to have originally exercised. One of his own supporters and admirers in the University of Oxford imparted to me as a probable conjecture—it could not be a certain fact—that in an advanced stage of middle life he first attained or suddenly awoke to a sense of boundless capability. But the timidity of youth, prolonged too far, has in old age been balanced and corrected by a degree of intellectual presumption, unheard of in the annals of biography. Its immediate result is to make him deaf to experts in any topic he approaches as a learner. In this way his aberration on the Eastern Question is elucidated. Never having visited the Bosphorus, he treats with scorn the language and opinions of those who have been months or years unravelling its secrets. Never having glanced at European movements in 1874 or 1875, he tramples on the views of men in his own party who then laboriously followed them, and claims to sweep away—as

[1] See the "Memoirs of Baron Stockmar."

wholly null and non-existing—transactions and events which do not fit into his case, and did not exercise his vigilance. Omnipotence itself is not expected to annihilate the past. Mr. Gladstone boldly claims to do so. Repeatedly enlightened, or at least admonished, on these points, he has not the industry to learn or courage to defend himself. He seeks, and unhappily he finds, a refuge in your Lordship. The next circumstance by which he is impeded in the pursuit of foreign policy is one—unlike the last—which all the public can appreciate. He is month after month, a contributor by name, to periodicals on every topic, English or American, material or moral, human or divine. We cannot possibly be harsh to conduct which necessity, philanthropy, or even love of toil has prompted. To scatter erudition, instead of planting cabbages, is fairly open to a leader who has abdicated. It is open to him, to lay down the basis—of a new encyclopædia, if he chooses. The error lies in claiming another function wholly incompatible with that by which his energy was mortgaged. To guide the State in European—above all, in Oriental difficulties—without a knowledge of Constantinople, Berlin, or Vienna, might well demand the concentrated toil, for some years at least, of even the most gifted. To appropriate that function and to snatch it, when himself avowedly preoccupied, to trample upon those who are exclusively and painfully devoted to it, to claim it as an auxiliary excitement, a subordinate *πάρεργον*, is a pretension so extravagant, as to be more easily forgiven to conceited youth than to morally intoxicated age, which does not understand the limit of its duty or its faculty. The mind of Mr. Gladstone, like a Continental river, has been effective at its source, through many lakes has kept a vigorous identity, has flowed by kingdoms little known to one another, and often seemed to gather volume in its progress. At last, like such a river, it is scattered and divided in innumerable channels. Its unity is lost before the ocean can absorb it. Amidst a belt of dreary marshes and impassable lagunes—where hang as vapours all the idols of Lord Bacon—no wonder that his barque of foreign policy should strand itself. The clearest atmosphere, the highest banks, and deepest waters, were essential to preserve it.

But there is something else more delicate to touch upon, which still may draw the unreflecting to adhere to him, and I should ill perform my task, if I omitted to allude to it. Among men who attach no very great importance to the rivalry of parties, or even to the conflict of opinions, there is a vague impression—fostered by himself and his biographers—that in

public virtue Mr. Gladstone towers above the ordinary standard, and ought to have support indifferently from all who, not having arrived at clear conceptions on the State, would like at least to elevate the moral standard of the political arena. It is, at least, desirable to know on what basis this title is supported, before it is allowed to govern a constituency and fix the prospect of an empire. Such a claim might have been urged for one whom Lord Macaulay after years of intercourse described as 'that great and good man,' William Wilberforce.[1] During his whole career, Mr. Wilberforce had made the sacrifice of place, in order better, as he thought, to put an end to a demoralising traffic. He may have acted wisely or unwisely; but what analogy exists between his path and that of Mr. Gladstone? Such a claim might have been urged for the late Earl Grey. In early youth, unfettered by hereditary ties, he joined a nearly desperate minority. With the exception of about a twelvemonth, from the death of Mr. Pitt to April 1807, the choice he made, the choice he never swerved from, confined him to the ranks of what was viewed as hopeless Opposition, for over forty years, when—

Bankrupt of life and prodigal of ease,

in his own appropriate citation, he took the office of First Minister. What analogy has such a path to that of Mr. Gladstone? On a topic of this character, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged,' is no doubt the maxim which the Founder of Christianity has given us. Mr. Gladstone may not be open to reproach for an undue desire of advancement, which, within certain bounds, is necessary to a statesman; but his friends have not the shadow of a pretext, for ranking him above political society in general as to any kind of elevation or self-sacrifice. His career has been a tortuous passage from one extreme—across a great variety of lucrative employments—to another. It is impossible that these extremes can both be true, although, if leaders of historical inquiry direct us, we are forced to hold that both are fatally erroneous. At the same time it is no departure from integrity to bridge them. When, however, statesmen alter their political connections, and when their conduct has to be interpreted, the long-ago established test consists in the inquiry, Have they gained by doing so? It cannot possibly escape us—however lenient we may be—that Mr. Gladstone has been an unvarying and steady gainer by his versatile development. It cannot possibly escape us that, as a

[1] See "Essay on Warren Hastings."

party, the Liberals were indispensable to him, while he was far indeed from being the secret prop of their majority in Parliament. What, then, invests him with a halo of austerity by which it is designed to overcome the less resolved electors of Midlothian? It is the habit he has cultivated all through his various career of constantly appealing to the name of the Divinity in general harangues: a habit which no other statesman feels himself at liberty to practise. It is curious that Chateaubriand, in his once celebrated work, 'Le Genie du Christianisme,' has pointed out the solemnity which eloquence might gain if this sort of colour was repeatedly imparted to it. Mr. Gladstone may not have required such a teacher. We cannot forget, however, that the lesson is one which Bubb Dodington might equally have practised. Had Bubb Dodington in early life defended national religion as indispensable on principle, and afterwards, without renouncing the opinion, invited an old kingdom in which a national religion flourished irreproachably, to agitate against it, the hint of Chateaubriand might not have seemed to him unnecessary.

So much for men insensible to facts and powerfully worked upon by language. The bulk of the electors may, however, demand a short and practical criterion for guiding their conclusion; and such an one immediately presents itself. When any public man demands of them the office of First Minister, they have merely to consider what turn the history of Great Britain would have taken, had the opinions he has urged invariably triumphed, had he been able in point of fact to sway that history by his judgment. Let this criterion be brought to bear on Mr. Gladstone—without a shade of passion—before the county of Midlothian tries to force him on the Sovereign. To begin, the whole march of legislation from 1833 to 1841 would have been fatally arrested. In 1850 the British fleet would ignominiously have turned its back upon the Slave Trade, and Lord Palmerston have been ejected from the Foreign Office amidst the insulting jeers of all the arbitrary powers which conspired for his ruin. In 1855 the French, British, and Sardinian armies would have been withdrawn without a triumph from Sebastopol. In 1857 the Bill upon Divorce would have been utterly defeated, as Mr. Gladstone acrimoniously resisted it. There never was a fairer struggle of Conservative and Liberal opinion in our epoch. The object was under the direction of Lord Palmerston—no revolutionary legislator—to give all classes of society the same prospect of emerging from unhappy ties, as belonged at that time only to the privileged, whose wealth

enabled them to force a Bill through both Houses of Parliament. Against divorce itself innumerable arguments are possible, with which the Church of Rome is perfectly familiar. But a system which concedes it to nobility and denies it to the middle orders cannot be defended, and yet would now exist had Mr. Gladstone been the arbiter. In 1859 the Tory Government would have been prolonged, until a season beyond the means of any one, to calculate at present. In 1866 a 7*l.* borough franchise would have been adopted as the germ of conflict and uneasiness, to rage perhaps for years until the present limit was adopted. The Act of 1832 would have been broken down, and nothing else been substituted for it. In 1874 the income-tax would have been removed, on the eve of all the difficulties the Eastern Question has produced, in such a way as to invite aggression, since foreign States are well acquainted with its efficacy, while no relief would have been given to the preponderating mass of the electors. In 1876, by signing the Berlin Memorandum, Great Britain would have become the last and lowest member of the new Holy Alliance. In 1877 she would have been dragged into a war with her ally, and aided Russia to advance over the Balkans. In 1878 the Congress of Berlin would have begun, without a shred of preparation to give the British representatives a flickering hope—they had no more—of being attended to. My Lord, need I go further? Will the electors artificially exalt to power a distinguished man, who, had not power luckily been wanting to him, would have been—however virtuous his desires—the author of confusion and dishonour at every stage where it was possible to fashion them?

But you and the electors you are guiding, too cautious to dispute the known annals of our country, may still regard the situation of Midlothian as embarrassing. You will remark, even if his success is doomed to bring Mr. Gladstone back to Downing Street, where he has little right to go, are we to grant a victory to the Conservatives? Are we to prop up a Government which you, who venture to admonish us, condemn as keenly as ourselves? No doubt the situation is embarrassing. So much the worse for the precipitate negotiator, wherever he may lurk, by whom Mr. Gladstone was lured over the Tweed into the conflict. I acquit your Lordship of all responsibility on that point. There is no proof that because you gave the late Prime Minister the invaluable service of a backer or a bottleholder, you dragged him into the arena. During an inevitable sojourn, you may have restrained and tempered him, as in the same manner a few years back the

Duke of Sutherland was thought to restrain and temper Garibaldi, for the general advantage. Avowedly you furnished him with pleasantry. Who knows that you are not the hidden source of any wisdom, which, as nuggets in a torrent, may here and there be dug out of his voluminous performance? To face the problem, can anybody doubt that the return of Lord Dalkeith will be more innocuous at least than the return of Mr. Gladstone? The return of Lord Dalkeith is not the necessary key to a Conservative majority. The return of Mr. Gladstone is the necessary path to an intolerable Government. But wary men, whom nothing can escape, will ask, What if in a new Parliament a majority of one vote supports the actual Government in power? Shall we not in that case have been guilty of prolonging its duration? Will not the single vote of Lord Dalkeith, in fact, have checked the retribution which might have otherwise descended? In the first place, the chance of a debate on the Address being closed by a majority of one, is so minute, that, like an inappreciable quantity in mathematics, it eludes us altogether. But there is something more convincing. The return of Mr. Gladstone for your county, heralding his general control over the State, will add much more to the Conservative array in the division than the single vote of Lord Dalkeith—after the defeat of Mr. Gladstone—can impart to it. If we consider merely the success the Opposition aim at, Lord Dalkeith ought to be returned against the candidate, whom none but a miscalculating head, could possibly have drawn to Midlothian. At the same time, I readily admit that the dilemma is confusing. Electors are well entitled to be puzzled as to the exact question on which they are voting. Is it how far Mr. Gladstone merits a renewed ascendancy in Downing Street? Is it how far the set of men Lord Beaconsfield has organised ought to go on ruling after his withdrawal? To reduce the two to any simple issue would apparently demand the old rules of special pleading which taught men to demur, reply, rejoin, rebut, until step by step they reached the mystic depth of surrebutters, and so elicited a final point for juries to determine. Like your Lordship, I was not brought up to the profession of the law, and cannot therefore handle these profound and excellent contrivances, for obliging men to see exactly what required an affirmative or negative. An escape has, however, occurred to me. Whether or not it is applied, depends entirely on your Lordship.

As yet the blame is limited, and no reverse has happened. The oratorical displays you have elicited, although they do

not merit approbation from our party, may still contribute something to the defeat of Ministerial supporters throughout Scotland. They have furnished animation and excitement to Midlothian, at a season when human nature calls out for artificial remedies of torpor. To yourself they cannot have been useless. Born as you may be to address the people, and not only Parliament, for decades, you have learnt more by watching Mr. Gladstone for a fortnight, than you would have done by studying for a period much longer the harangues of either Cleon or O'Connell. To leave off in the midst of a bad game, the object being legitimate, is a counsel equally opposed to fortitude and prudence. But to retire in a favourable breeze, when the end is seen to be doubtful or pernicious, cannot be unworthy of true wisdom, although the process needs a steady resolution, a decisive temper, and a clear belief in the uncertainty of fortune, to effect it. I have already shown that as yet your interference may be favourably construed. If it is not, misguided admiration is the limit of the charge against you. Your action possibly has saved the county you legitimately guide, from inconvenience and extravagance, much greater than they have yet been called upon to suffer or to witness. It is something at an early age, with no experience of either struggle or adversity, to regulate the movements of a public man who occupies the world, although his office has eluded and his judgment has abandoned him. In all great affairs, however, as M. Rouher so well remarked, not long ago, in reference to one endowed with every other gift, and now, perhaps, admonished into that one, 'la mesure,' self-restraint, the power to stop, is indispensable. If you persist, against the voice of friendly admonition, your own career may possibly be scrutinised. None who have attentively pursued the transactions of the Eastern Question, and the transactions which sprang out of it, can possibly forget your vigorous display, in July 1875, against the identic note of October 1874, when for the first time the House of Lords directed its attention to the topic, and thus engaged the criticism of the world, far more than upon subsequent occasions. So neither can the diplomatic circle have forgotten the more original and marked proceeding you determined on, when at the beginning of the war in 1877, upon your own responsibility, you insisted at Westminster, that unless the treaties of 1856 were carried out, they ought, by some decree among the signatary Powers, to be annihilated. In this way you became observed as the enemy of the Holy Alliance, the partisan of treaties, the disciple of Lord Palmerston, the monitor of those who in the Opposition began to swerve from any lesson he

bequeathed to them. Can you pretend that Mr. Gladstone has shared the part which you, during a time at least, so manfully adhered to? Imagine—what, indeed, I am unwilling to suppose—that the three Emperors had been permitted to trace to his attentive eyes the very course which they demanded of him. How would they have exercised the privilege? They would have required first the deepest silence as to their resolution to negotiate with any vassal principality; after that, a burst of rhetoric as soon as the Bulgarian atrocities were known, so loud as to make society forget that they were the result of panic as much as our atrocities in Ceylon and Jamaica; next, a system organised to give Russia a new and favourable aspect in Great Britain, with perhaps an aristocratic millionaire to be at once its standard-bearer and decoy-duck. They would have urged a series of harangues in January 1877 to blacken the Ottoman Empire, to discredit its assemblies in their cradle, to give Russia every excuse for the invasion which she meditated. Advancing step by step in their instructions, they would have possibly requested the statesman who, as Premier, had assured mankind by his Under-Secretary that great improvement could be recognised in the dominion of the Sultan as regards the Christian races, to give the open lie to what he had promulgated, and strain his voice in the assertion that since the Crimean War it was impossible to see a diminution of misgovernment. They would have asked at least a standing menace of hostile agitation to be brought to bear upon the Government, should it adopt a step—the mildest, the most guarded—to execute the treaties of 1856, when Russia ultimately trampled on them. They would have urged irregular, officious, enthusiastic shelter of Lord Derby, when he was felt by all the world to be the champion of inaction in the Cabinet after San Stephano was occupied. They would have next required—when national opinion had snatched the Foreign Office from his tenure—unmeasured opposition to every effort by which the Government endeavoured to give a tardy prospect of success to any Congress which they entered. My Lord, I do not say that these demands have all been accurately executed; the task of an accuser has fatigued me; I only call upon you to deny it. But if you cannot do so, does it become an enemy of the Holy Alliance to frame new triumphs for its indefatigable agent? You may tell me, that alliance has been dissipated by the more recent ties of Austria and Germany. But can you fail to see it may revive at any moment; that no security against it has been organised; that

only two are possible—a transformation of its elements, or such an union of the Western Powers as would render it innocuous and incapable. But this is not the time to dwell upon the laws or possibilities of Europe. If Lord Palmerston returned a moment to the tempests which have occupied us, how would he regard you? In what terms would he address you? He would be at least entitled to remark—and no one else could do so:

Fortis in armis
Caesareis Labienus erat—[1]

although his taste, his moderation, his indulgence, mingling with gratitude for the past support you had extended to his principles, would not allow him to complete or to persist in the quotation. But foreign policy perhaps no longer occupies you as it used to. In the unruffled fortune you retain, thoughts, pleasures, objects, wishes, rapidly succeed each other. But you are not indifferent to the prospects of the Opposition on which you would impose a burden, beyond the force of any party to bear up against. Above all, you are not indifferent to the fame of Scotland, which is seriously hazarded. It cannot be denied that in spite of clouds which hang over its agriculture, Scotland has now arrived at a prosperity—in everything rising above matter—which the great career of nations does not frequently exhibit. Its patrician leaders, whether by practised eloquence, or business-like capacity, or diplomatic penetration, are able to retain the general respect of the community they live in. Its farmers would nearly rank with the proprietors of many distant countries. In Scotland more than any part of Europe we observe the spirit of reform, united with the spirit of feudality. Its Established Church I have alluded to elsewhere, because the argument required it. But its Dissenting bodies—whether we glance at the Free Kirk or mix from time to time with the United Presbyterians—may claim to lead the nonconforming world in zeal, in erudition, and in orthodoxy. Its Universities, having been long the starting-point of thinkers and discoverers, have now become the goal of rulers and historians. Its press is so arranged that by a single organ ideas and facts may be brought to bear at once on every hearth—the proudest and the lowliest—from Berwick to the Orkneys.[2] Its manufacturers have not—as yet—descended to the practices by which Lancashire has fallen from its zenith. On these diversified advantages, on

[1] Lucan, "Pharsalia," Book v. line 345.
[2] The *Scotsman*.

this unrivalled scene, for some years Royalty has shone with a steadier and warmer radiance, than it is able to impart to any corner of the Empire. But there is one truth with which this happy and united population have been thoroughly impregnated. It is—that where much is given, much may be required. The lesson will be far from satisfactorily followed, if Scotland, yielding to seduction, should impose not only on the remainder of Great Britain, not only on the whole United Kingdom, but on Canada, Australia, South Africa, a ruler who no longer, as in 1868, compelled to undertake the tasks a long array of Liberal engagements had prepared for him, would be left to the unguided impulses, of which his party at the present moment is the victim. Whenever Scotland is so far misled, the false result can only be attributed to ignorance. It would arise—your Lordship knows it—from the circumstance that the transactions of the Eastern Question and its offshoots are not followed in the North, as they are followed in the capital—that Edinburgh, with all its pride of architecture, of society, of jurisprudence, is not so much a gate of Europe as it has been; and that the documents which ultimately sway the mind at Westminster have little grasp over Midlothian. You well know that if the thread of the political transactions which have occupied the Legislature for the last five years, was impressed upon your county, as it is on any expert of the Foreign Office, or as it must be on Lord Napier and Ettrick, you would not wish to offer Mr. Gladstone as a candidate. In other words, you cherish darkness for an enterprise, which is without a prospect of success if dawn should chance to overtake it. It is not possible to heighten this consideration: it is not, therefore, prudent by another to impair it.

Although many propositions have been submitted to your Lordship, I trust that none you are not forced to acquiesce in, have been hazarded. On cool reflection you will easily admit that, however moderate your aim, excited persons have resolved to seek in Midlothian an instrument of raising the late Prime Minister from the mire in which he plunged himself in 1874, and that of washing off—without apology on his part—the deeper stains he has contracted since, as the traducer of the Crimean War and open patron of St. Petersburg. You will not doubt that in that capital a burst of exultation would await the victory he aims at. We shall not differ, I am sure, as to the insufficiency of his claims to be restored as a financial *Deus ex machinâ*, under a poor disguise, for allowing his fantastic schemes in every department to submerge the Cabinet which had the weakness to invoke him. You will not be able to

contest the general exactness of what is urged as to his ambiguous, reluctant, and disloyal friendship to the Liberals, during the long time that memory enables me to trace it. You will find that I have accurately weighed his late performances, as soon as you succeed in flinging off the spell by which his elocution has very possibly detained you. His ineptitude in all foreign business and Continental action cannot possibly escape you, even if you should attribute it to causes more deeply sought, and philosophically traced, than those which I have ventured to delineate. I have done my best to wound no further than the cause required, susceptibility in those who from inevitable ties are unable to regard him in the light in which posterity will see him. Some apology is due, indeed, for the length at which I have determined to address you. But what is it compared to that which you have recently endured? What is it compared to the two volumes of unfounded and unmitigated eulogy, which under the fictitious title of biography, a reckless partisan has flung into the cauldron of Midlothian?[1] Were I to discuss the late transactions on the Eastern question with the precision an official paper would suggest, it would be seen that in these lines the gravest charges against the late Prime Minister, have been passed over altogether. If heat has anywhere escaped me, I have emerged from long abeyance as a writer, to fight a battle for the honour of a party, for the independence of a Sovereign, for Scotland, the United Kingdom, and the world at large, which cannot be indifferent to the hands our Government is placed in. Should the corrupt and odious régime your county is invited to establish be revived it is an error to maintain, as some have done, that the Queen might justly abdicate her power. Such a course would take away the only plank of safety to be found in the contingency imagined. It will be time, however, when it happens, for every public man who has not means to put an end to it, to seek in other realms, employment for the faculties which such a gloomy sample of electoral perversion, of national relapse, and of imperial discomfiture may leave him.

To these appeals you may reply indeed, that even if my counsels were pursued, there is an arrangement in the background to defeat them. But such an answer has no efficacy. It is true that a Bœotian city, of mental fog still darker than its atmosphere, since unaffected by the fitful gleams which penetrate the latter, may be eager to accept the candidate whom your electors have repudiated. It is true that such a city in vanity, in ignorance, in utter disregard of Liberal

[1] "Life of Mr. Gladstone," by Barnett Smith.

opinion he has outraged, in dense indifference to the welfare of the Opposition he has cruelly discredited, may resolve to sink itself, down to the level, of all that Mr. Gladstone has attempted or promulgated. Let it do so. It is enough for Scotland to observe, erect in her inviolable dignity—

> Parcitur Hesperiæ, procul hoc ut in orbe remoto
> Abscondat fortuna nefas.

Besides, no common body of electors can impose your newly-chosen leader on the Empire. He only needs the toil of the iconoclast, when he becomes the idol of Midlothian. On the whole your Lordship is entitled to withdraw the Parliamentary Leviathan it has been your fancy to appropriate from the waters you have suffered him to play in. It is better to drop the curtain on a piece which rapidly deteriorates, than to wait till the resentment of the listeners, impelled by knowledge and advancing with perception, confounds the stage, the actor and the manager together in its reasonable violence.

I have the honour to remain, my Lord,
Your Lordship's faithful servant,

A SCOTTISH LIBERAL.

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